United Nations A/HRC/26/NGO/88

General Assembly

Distr.: General
6 June 2014

English only

Human Rights Council
Twenty-sixth session
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 May 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.14-04443 (E)
1404443

Please recycle

Human Rights defenders in the People's Republic of China

In its report for the year 2013, the Chinese NGO „Chinese Human Rights Defenders" listed around 220 cases of arrests of Chinese human rights activists. There are systematic intimidations against human rights activists, house arrests, arbitrary arrests and detentions. Also, they cannot hope for mercy in court, because 99 percent of the court proceedings end with a conviction – and often with a long prison sentence – in order to systematically silence the critics of corruption, abuse of power and lack of democratization. China's security forces and judiciary are systematically flouting international human rights conventions in order to silence human rights activists.

Ahead of the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown the Chinese government has intensified its efforts to hinder human rights activists to remember what happened in Beijing in June 1989. Activists and lawyers who held a "June 4 commemoration seminar" at a private home in Beijing on May 3, were subsequently persecuted by state authorities. Within days, five of the 15 participants detained and accused of "picking quarrels and creating a disturbance" One journalist, Gao Yu, did not even make it to the seminar: he was arrested beforehand on charges of leaking state secrets.

The human rights defender Cao Shunli died in prison in March 2014 after having been denied adequate medical care for her illness. She died at age fifty-two. She had been wanting to go to Geneva to take part in a human rights training seminar at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland in order to advocate for a more transparent human rights policy in China in September 2013. Cao Shunli was arrested before she could get to Europe on 14 September 2013.

On 26 January 2014, the human rights advocate Xu Zhiyong was sentenced to four years in prison for „gathering crowds to disturb public order". On 11 April, 2014, the sentence was confirmed by an appeals court in Beijing. Xu Zhiyong, a law professor at the University of Beijing was one of the leading representatives of the democracy movement in the country. He had founded a grass-roots movement promoting citizens' rights which had campaigned for equal rights to education for the children of rural migrant workers as well as the public disclosure of Communist Party officials' assets. The People's Republic of China signed the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2003 and ratified it three years later, yet Xu Zhiyong was punished for advocating the spirit of the Convention whose Article 52.2 states that the adherents „shall consider establishing "financial disclosure systems for public officials and sanctions for non-compliance.

The imprisonment of the prominent Uyghur professor for economics Ilham Tohti on January 15, 2014, for alleged „separatism" was set up over a period of at least seven months. In order to silence the human rights activist, state security had collected allegedly incriminating evidence and harrassed or arrested some of Tohti's students. Ilham Tohti is well-known in China and abroad for his attempts to mediate between the Uyghur and the Han Chinese. On his website „Uyghur online", he explained the background of the unrests in the nortwest of the People's Republic of China, where most Uyghurs live, in Chinese language. Before his arrest on January 15, 2014, Tohti had already been put under house arrest or threatened by the security authorities several times.

In December 2013, two Tibetans came to a violent death in Chinese custody within only eleven days: the Buddhist monk Ngawang Jamyang and Kunchok Dhakpa, a critic of mining projects. Both of them were tortured, although torture is strictly prohibited under Chinese laws. The People's Republic of China has ratified the Convention against Torture. Almost every week, Tibetan human rights activists are sentenced to long prison terms for merely attempting to advocate the preservation of the Tibetan language and culture or protesting against the destruction of their homes in the course of new mining projects. Tibetan citizens of the People's Republic of China also face draconian punishment if they dare to publicly commemorate those Tibetans who burned themselves.

The Mongolian human rights activist Hada has been illegally kept imprisoned for more than three and a half years. He was supposed to be released from prison on 10 December, 2010. His Wife Xinna and his son Uiles are under house arrest. Xinna describes Hada's health as "catastrophic."

China's "New Citizen Movement" – a movement that campaigns for an end to corruption, for democratic change and a rule of law – is systematically criminalized too. Several dozen members of the movement were arrested during the past six months and some of them have been sentenced to prison in an unfair trial already.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council to urge the Government of the People's Republic of China to:

- Release the Mongolian human rights activist Hada and the Uyghur Ilham Tohti from prison;
- Ensure the freedom of press and free speech;
- Ensure the adequate medical treatment of prisoners;
- Cease its harassmen to f human rights defenders;
- Bring its laws into line with accepted international standards.